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## **Higher expertise, pedagogic rights and the post-truth society**

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## **Abstract**

This paper discusses the nature of higher expertise in society and the role of higher education in constituting that expertise. It is argued that higher expertise relies on disciplined norms against which expert activity can be evaluated, and such norms are the basis not only for knowledge communities in higher education but also for other societal institutions. However, expertise in these communities and institutions is challenged by both external and internal factors, which can be explored via Durkheim's discussion of the social organisation of religion and magic. It is suggested that 'Post-truth' developments are fuelled by the marketisation and commodification of expertise, and by a collapse in deference and trust throughout society to which expert institutions and communities have not yet adequately responded. Bernstein's pedagogic rights of enhancement, inclusion and participation are examined to offer insight into how higher expertise may be enabled in such a context.

**Keywords:** disciplinarity; educational knowledge; academic practice; expertise

## **Introduction**

This paper discusses the nature of higher expertise in society and the role of higher education in constituting and advancing that expertise. It is argued that the development and sustenance of higher expertise is reliant on certain conditions of disciplinary community, and on norms of social practice agreed by experts who have a stake in the ongoing development of that expertise. These are necessary elements not only for higher education but also as the basis for all forms of civic practice in contemporary society, including in professional bodies, the media and government.

Drawing on the sociology of knowledge and the philosophy of expertise it is argued that the realisation of expertise is challenged in higher education by marketisation and the commodification of knowledge, with consequences for academic practice. Universities are under pressure to demonstrate their value and relevance in the context of mass data flows, public access to information sources and the intensity of the contemporary media cycle (Altbach 2015). New uncertainties have arisen with multiple potential sources of knowledge, leading to difficulties with weighing arguments and validating evidence, and with separating opinion from justified true belief. ‘Post-truth’ developments are fuelling this a commodification and generating confusion about issues of interest and bias, and therefore obscuring the potential for a genuinely democratic participatory discourse. This is achieved by a ‘growing distrust in facts’ that are said to suit the agenda of ‘the establishment’ (Peters 2017, 563), and ‘appeals to emotion’ (ibid., 564) that exploit the difficulties the contemporary media has in articulating substantive political debate. Peters suggests the possibility to deliberately disregard truthfulness ‘erodes trust as the very foundation of relations amongst human beings’ and that ‘argumentation, deliberation, reflection and fact-checking’ are squeezed out of the relentless cycle of news and information that dominates the public sphere. These post-truth phenomena are closely allied with the assault on inner commitments to knowledge and expert practice that have characterised contemporary professional and academic life, (Beck and Young 2005), an assault that is primarily driven by commercial interests that see academic and professional forms of organisation as an obstacle to profitability (Bernstein 2000; Freidson 2001). If commercial opportunity overrides other considerations of quality and value, then deceit is a viable strategy if it leads to revenue.

The potential of higher expertise, and its erosion in a post-truth society, can be helpfully explored through the contrasting Durkheimian models of the secularised church and the magical society. These secularised church is used here to sketch out the modes of organisation that underpin expert society, through which expert practices can emerge which

are based upon consensually-agreed norms. Inclusion and participation are the mainstay of the model Durkheim outlines – the boundaries between experts and novices are permeable. Magical societies, on the other hand, are merely opportunities to share processes of exclusivity and deceit, but only amongst a closed circle. Participation is instrumental, and only where there is an opportunity for individual gain. Any sharing of expertise more widely to those experiencing the magical acts would defeat the purpose of the activity. Any commitment to truth or community becomes a sign of weakness, and an opportunity that others can exploit for personal gain. The final part of the paper explores the potential for Bernstein's pedagogic rights of enhancement, inclusion and participation as an insight into how higher expertise may be enabled and constrained, and as a means for thinking through academic practice in higher education. These three rights are seen as interrelated and co-dependent. The neglect of one or more of these rights in an educational community is likely to hinder the ongoing development of expertise in higher education. Higher expertise needs a framework to support it, and to be able to clearly express the processes by which it can be sustained. Bernstein's pedagogic rights can offer this opportunity.

### **What constitutes higher expertise?**

It is important to first consider the conditions through which expertise is generated. Winch (2010), in a philosophical deliberation on the nature and practice of expertise, draws attention to the importance of normativity, purposiveness, and the interrelation between forms of know-how and know-that. Expert activity, whether it takes place in academic or other occupational contexts, requires the availability and enactment of systematic propositional knowledge, inferential and procedural know-how and some acquaintance with subject matter (Winch 2010). Winch demonstrates why these forms of knowledge are necessary for expert activity by identifying expertise with the capacity to make appropriate judgements in novel situations, taking account of existing knowledge and practice. Experts are able to interpret and apply propositions as a consequence of being able to make inferences from their wider knowledge of related propositions, whilst also understanding how procedures are employed to make judgements about new claims to knowledge.

Such a view of the use of knowledge in expert activity is pertinent to occupations for which expertise is intermittently or regularly required (of which arguably there are many, including many manual occupations) and occupations which are defined primarily or solely by their expertise (i.e. the professions including academics). Thus an expert historian or physicist

should be able not only to apply necessary procedures to evaluate a new claim to knowledge, but also to understand the significance of such a claim, once it has been admitted to the body of knowledge (Muller 2014). A doctor or an engineer, while they may not necessarily need to handle new claims to knowledge as part of their work, will require the capacity to understand how that knowledge impacts on their medical or engineering practice, and the decisions that they take about patients and projects.

However, expert activity is only made possible by the existence of certain social conditions. Firstly, there must be some scope for the evaluation of activity against existing norms, a capacity for norm-referencing (Winch 2010). This recognises that expert activity does not exist in a time-space vacuum – there are others engaged in the pursuit of expertise in any occupation or academic discipline, and there is a history to that expert practice that has constituted ways of conducting the practice and evaluating claims to expertise that may be valuable for current practice. Secondly, any notion of expertise implies a desire to maintain and if possible improve a high standard of performance, and therefore ‘criteria for excellence’ (Macintyre 2001) are likely to be central to the norms by which expert practice is defined. Thirdly, expert practice relies on a notion of community through which the practice is pursued.. The idea that practice should be evaluated *by peers* is central to a norm-referenced practice that espouses expertise. Such norms cannot be generated without a community who can co-operatively establish and enact ‘mutual accountability’ (Rouse 2007, 48) for the practice, and this may well require some forms of ritual interaction to sustain the community (Collins 2000). It is the expert community which is able to establish agreed procedures for the evaluation of knowledge claims as expertise iterates, and to maintain the inferential capacity which makes propositional knowledge meaningful.

Central to these notions of mutual accountability in the development of community norms is the notion of telos, or purpose. Without a purpose towards which expertise is directed there is no substance or problematic by which expert activity can be evaluated apart from the self-referential operations and survival instincts of the community itself (Winch 2010; Hager 2011; Young and Muller 2014). No community exists within a vacuum, and as society changes and technologies develop, the purposes of experts may need to be reimagined and re-explained, including to novices as they enter the expert community. Rouse (2007) and Winch (2010) recognise this in suggesting that there are special forms of human activity (i.e. practices for Macintyre 1981) that are defined by their purposiveness and social contribution, to their members and to wider society. Hager (2011), in an engagement with MacIntyre’s

notion of a practice, emphasises the significance of socially beneficial external goods that are simultaneously expressions of the internal goods generated by the practice: he provides the example of the construction of a cathedral as evidence of the importance of a 'balance of internal and external goods' (2011, 553). A public building such as a cathedral offers an opportunity not only to fulfil a 'social purpose, but also to offer an 'outstanding example...of architectural vision' that provides 'an exemplar and inspiration' (ibid., 552-553) for those interested in architecture and construction. Rouse (2007) distinguishes between practices that have something 'at stake' and those that are simply expressions of regularity or rule-following. These 'at stake' practices clearly relate to the academic and professional disciplines of higher education, which are seeking to produce internal and external goods for social benefit. Whether Architecture or Chemistry (Hager 2011), such disciplines are purposefully pursuing problematics and deeper understandings of the world. This is never really 'knowledge for its own sake' – there is always a broader purpose towards which inquiry is directed.

So what are the underlying conditions for this purposiveness that sustains a 'criteria of excellence' for the expert practice of an academic discipline or an expert occupation? Young and Muller (2007) draw attention to Williams's () work on 'truth' and 'truthfulness', and the relations between these, for an understanding of the sociology of knowledge. For many, the purpose of academic work is to establish the truth, or at least an approximation of ontological reality (Young and Muller 2007).e. The enactment of 'truthfulness', understood as 'an eagerness to see through appearances to the real structures and motives that lie behind them' (Williams 2002, 1)), is fundamental to academic expertise. This truthfulness involves the scrutiny and challenge of 'received wisdom' in the discipline and ongoing critique of new claims to knowledge. It thus informs methodologies and disciplinary procedures and dispositions across the academic disciplines, and provides an imperative – an ongoing spirit of inquiry. In the context of the practice of a professional occupation such as medicine or engineering, the commitment to truthfulness might be seen as a commitment to integrity and rigour as much as truth itself, and to the enactment of practice according to the criteria of excellence established by the professional community. However, as Williams (2002) indicates, the commitment to truthfulness can undermine commitments to truth, if it is manifested in a manner that construes the concept of truth itself as questionable. While knowledge may always be fallible and revisable, the assertion that truth claims are only

relative and open to ‘subjective interpretation’ opens up opportunities for the ‘subordination of truth’ (Peters 2017, 565) to other more powerful concerns.

The notion of expertise also suggests that it is possible to conduct an activity in a non-expert manner, as central to the notion is the idea that activities and practices can be evaluated as to whether they meet normatively-agreed standards or not. This opens up the potential for differentiation between the different enactments of a practice on the basis of criteria of excellence, and also offers the opportunity for progress through a trajectory from novice to competent practitioner to expert (Winch 2010). It makes it possible to make evaluative grounded judgements about claims to knowledge and claims to competence, asserting that disciplinary and professional communities can soundly and reasonably discriminate between these. A suitably initiated expert can thus judge whether a claim to knowledge or expertise is indeed only an expression of individual opinion, or in fact a more reasonable claim based upon argument, reasoning and where necessary substantive evidence. Educational experts can expose dubious claims through the application of rigour, reasoning and disciplinary knowledge (e.g. Coffield et al. 2004 on learning styles), and architectural experts possessing ‘the requisite knowledge and experience’ (Hager 2011, 553) are able not only to appreciate the aesthetic of building design but also the principles of construction that ensure the building does not collapse. Purposive expertise, mutually constituted within a community of experts, therefore offers the opportunity to differentiate between claims and to establish a mechanism through which claims can be judged in accordance with recognised criteria. As noted above, this also depends on a systematic knowledge base and the development of certain forms of know-how, all of which are (ideally) in a process of continual iteration as new claims are sorted and managed, and redundant claims discarded when no longer tenable.

### **The role of higher expertise in society**

Higher education can be seen as a significant contributor of higher expertise in contemporary society. The production of knowledge through research and inquiry has enabled the development of bodies of disciplinary knowledge which enable authoritative judgements to be made about claims to knowledge, not only within higher education but also in wider social contexts. Those Higher Education Institutions influenced by the Humboldtian emphasis on the ‘necessary expansion and reproduction of scientific knowledge and research’ (Nybm



2003, 144) may see inquiry as central to their mission, tending towards a view of knowledge as emergent and iterative, rather than as 'received wisdom' to be (just) handed down through the generations. Thus bodies of academic knowledge may develop in ways that respond to wider social, economic and technological change, while remaining rooted in particular traditions of inquiry. A degree of stability in procedures for evaluating knowledge claims over time enables knowledge to be accumulated that does not unnecessarily repeat earlier contributions. Moreover, academic practices that illustrate the centrality of excellence criteria should reassure those external to the discipline that claims to knowledge are evaluated fairly and with recourse to established and mutually agreed procedures. This enables disciplinary traditions to develop that can offer insight to those who study them or at least accept their claims as credible. Thus the physical and natural and social sciences, the humanities and applied or professionally-orientated disciplines such as medicine or engineering are able to demonstrate, through their procedures, that they can offer expertise that is rigorously scrutinised.

Yet, as outlined above, if the purpose of the expert practice is so internally controlled by an expert community that it takes no account of the wider interests of society and changing social and technological conditions, then its claims of expertise are increasingly hollow. The notion of expertise requires that others value your knowledge for what it offers in terms of insight, or in terms of its capacity to help in the solving of problems. That expert knowledge may have a social or occupational role, and in many cases may feed into multiple social practices. Thus historical expertise is valued for its capacity to offer insight into the ongoing development of the world around us over time, while medical expertise brings scientific knowledge together to address the 'supervening purpose' (Muller 2009, 213) of sustaining and improving physical and mental health. Disciplines in higher education thus have varied purposes that shape the nature of the expertise they offer, who that expertise is valued by and the various ways in which it is used. Those involved in producing historical or medical knowledge are unlikely to have a full view of all the uses to which that knowledge could be put, and of who is it likely to be valued by, but they are likely to have a reasonable grasp of the principal aspects of the discipline and therefore the various dimensions of the disciplinary purpose.

None of what is said here, however, suggests that all academic disciplines consistently maintain clear and mutually agreed purposes, or adhere to criteria of excellence and exemplary and equitable procedures for judging new claims to knowledge. The various

criticisms of bias in peer review, and instances of the variable or inconsistent scrutiny of new knowledge claims (Rennie 2016), suggests that disciplinary 'health' can vary. The purposes of disciplinary inquiry may become muddled and unclear if the disciplinary problematic or manner of inquiry is not mutually agreed. There is no guarantee that knowledge will accumulate or progress over time, and instead disciplinary activity may descend into a 'bureaucratisation of intellectual life' full of 'routinized activity' and the 'quantitative extension of classifications' (Collins 2000, 799), which ultimately do little to clarify or provide insight. The profane dimensions of disciplinary activity may also tend to predominate, if market imperatives, government policies or career incentives ascend to such a degree that novel forms of research are either not recognised or not undertaken.

It can be argued that the purpose of higher expertise in higher education is to produce and iterate 'collective representations' that symbolise and unify society (Durkheim 1912/2001). The iterative aspect is vital, as what counts as the 'sacred' in a given time or space may alter with social, economic and technological change. The notion of a 'collective representation' suggests recognition of the value of this symbolic knowledge across society, and thus an acknowledgement of the role of higher education as a social institution that helps to bind the collectivity and to shape its identity. Such a relationship could be characterised as deferential, especially if higher education is considered only or chiefly accessible, or relevant, to certain social groups. Indeed, historically it can be argued that the relationship between the population and higher education mirrored the previous relationship between the population and the church, as higher education replaced the church as the site of sacred thought from the enlightenment onwards (Bernstein 2000), but reorientated the notion of revealed truth towards ceaseless inquiry. Furthermore, as mass higher education has evolved, the collective representations of the past that suited the elite have been increasingly challenged. New collective representations and new forms of higher expertise are required as wider swathes of society 'access the site of the unthinkable' (Wheelahan 2012).

Durkheim (2001) offers a useful further distinction that can assist in the better understanding of the conditions for healthy development of expertise, the iteration of the collective representations over time and the social organisation of higher education. In the elementary forms of religious life, Durkheim identifies a defining feature of a society as consisting of members who 'share a common conception of the sacred world and its relation to the profane world' and who 'translate this common conception into identical practices' (2001, 42-43). This was the basis of an idealised Church, for Durkheim, which is not 'simply a priestly

brotherhood’ but a ‘moral community formed by all believers...worshippers as well as priests’ (44). In a post-enlightenment world where the revealed truth is replaced by inquiry, uncertainty and the challenges to any hierarchy of expertise, the relationship between the priests and the worshippers is altered significantly. The priest experts no longer have access to the revealed truth by virtue of their status but must become stewards of the process of the development of expertise. They are required to support the congregation (the people) in becoming more expert and eventually becoming the priest experts themselves, should they so wish. The displacement of the traditional church as the fount of knowledge results in a democratisation of expertise and a flattening of hierarchies, but within an institutional structure in which there remains an underlying shared conception of the relationship between the ‘sacred’ (or expert knowledge) and the ‘profane’ (non-expert knowledge) (Hordern 2018). While higher education therefore assumes from religion a central role in establishing societal collective representations, it adopts the requirement for a shared conception of expert knowledge and a set of values (a moral community) that underpinned the earlier church, even though that knowledge and those values may be very different from those held in earlier times.

But does this lead to a distinctive or even singular role for higher education in society in the sustenance of higher expertise? In our contemporary societies founded on governmental, legal, professional and civic institutions, it seems important to consider whether there is anything distinctive about the relationship of higher education to expertise in wider society. The development of professional societies and organisations has historically been closely intertwined with higher forms of education (Bernstein 2000; Beck and Young 2005), and thus similar normative concerns and challenges may be experienced across various institutional forms. Beck and Young suggest that academia and the professions are subject to similar contemporary challenges, including ‘requirements to meet externally imposed performance criteria’ and ‘demands to demonstrate the relevance of their work’, leading to a context in which ‘cherished identities and commitments have been undermined’ (2005, 184). States have increasingly advanced governance structures for both the professions and higher education that have eroded the essence of professional logic through marketization and accountability mechanisms (Freidson 2001), and this challenges the capacity of academic and professional communities to control their own norms and shape their own expertise. For example, we have seen increasing challenges to professional authority in the classical professions (i.e. Medicine; Law) that parallel a scepticism regarding the authority of

academics (Beck and Young 2005). While some of this exposure to scrutiny may highlight abuse and corrupt practices, the tools by which accountability is assured and performance measured have had an impact on professional discretion and autonomy, undermining the role of professional judgement (Beck and Young 2005).

Bernstein's (2000) work suggests that the link between higher education and the professions can be found in the relationship between Christianity and higher education, with the 'inwardness and commitment' found in the notion of the 'professional' shaping the 'terms of practical engagement in the outer world' (Beck and Young 2005, 187). For Bernstein (2000), echoing Durkheim (2001), it was the relationship of religion to society that had provided a model for contemporary institutional forms in higher education and the professions. The twist, post-enlightenment, is in the collapse of deference to a hierarchy and to established religion, and in the requirement to develop a new pedagogical relationship between experts and novices. The uncertainty and fluidity in this new scenario has opened up new forms of logic, based on the market and bureaucratic forms, to make inroads into higher education and the professions, introducing new objectives which dispute the 'inwardness and commitment' and restructure academic and professional identities (Freidson 2001; Beck and Young 2005). However, it could be argued that parts of higher education and the professions have also been slow to respond to the new mass engagement with collective representations (Lockett and Naicker 2016) – with the consequence that they may appear to protect specific elite interests in their own self-interested projects (Larson 1979). There are pressures on higher education institutions brought to bear by dominant models of elite education, including the global research university and the liberal arts college (Marginson 2006). This results in educational activities becoming intertwined with symbols of privilege and exclusivity, and barriers for those who may find such symbols alien or oppressive.

### **Constraints and challenges to higher expertise**

Higher education is thus not isolated in its expert responsibilities to society, as professional organisations co-constitute this higher expertise. Higher education can be seen as central to the shaping of professional logic and organisation, and to the constitution of professional expertise, and therefore attacks on the expert role of higher education have ramifications for the wider fabric of professional and civic life. As noted above, academic and professional work are subject to considerable external pressures in the context of contemporary society.

The collapse of deference has not been seamlessly replaced in higher education by a more participative secular church in which inquiry is embraced (Durkheim 2001). External pressures have nevertheless been paralleled by concomitant internal challenges within the academic and professional communities themselves.

Durkheim's (2001) characterisation of the role of an idealised church in society, and suggestion that this is the basis for how we should consider the development of collective representations in contemporary society, is contrasted with the social organisation of magic. Durkheim identifies a key characteristic of magic as taking a kind of 'professional pleasure' in 'profaning holy things' through 'rites which are the mirror image of religious ceremonies' (2001, 42), collapsing differentiation between the sacred and the profane. While an (idealised) secular church is characterised by a participative collectivity (the congregation), magic relies not on shared conceptions and understandings but on deception and an absence of understanding. The relationship between the magician and his 'clientele' is 'accidental and transitory' (ibid., 43) and is characterised not by a respect for truth but by persuasion and control. As Durkheim notes, 'magic societies never include the believers in magic but only the magicians' (ibid., 44), and thus their expertise is only thus because of their exclusivity. The magician seeks to gain and exercise power to secure his objectives – the manipulation of his audience. Instead of fostering the accuracy and sincerity which Williams (2002) suggests is necessary for truth and truthfulness, the magician thrives on opportunities for deceit and disorientation.

Durkheim's contrast between the idealised church and the organisation of magic raises a number of points that are relevant to higher expertise. The translation of the church model into the secularised version post the enlightenment (in the shape of a Humboldtian community of inquiry) is a model for the growth of expertise in society. For expertise to persist in a community which is conscious of the iterative character of knowledge, there is a need to absorb new initiates as the process of inquiry is continual. Equally, the iterative character of knowledge and the spirit of inquiry requires a form of partnership with the world beyond the institution. Withdrawal into the monastic sphere is not sufficient in the post-enlightenment university, as few truths can be found there. Thus there is an impetus to remain open to society, to sustain and transmit the model of expertise. This is the opposite of the context of magic, where withdrawal and secrecy is necessary; the magician is a 'recluse' (Durkheim 2001, 44) and partnership is only with fellow magicians, and even so such relations may be only transitory. Furthermore, trust, community and norm-based 'mutual

accountability' (Rouse 2001) are characteristics of a community of inquiry (Winch 2010; Beck and Young 2005), but the antithesis of magic. In the community of inquiry, the mutual accountability builds common bonds and a durability that can act as a repository of collective memory and wisdom, and through which 'truthfulness' can be enacted without forgetting the previous knowledge work of the community - the claims discussed, agreed and discarded.

This mutual accountability accrues power for the community through shared conceptions of the world that can be refined and agreed, and yet adapted in the light of new findings and considerations. However, that power and immutability in the face of external pressures can be seen to be at the heart of contemporary tension in higher education, and indeed the challenge to notions of higher expertise outlined earlier. In a context in which market logics and commodification are reshaping the processes of higher education, the resilience of the organisational model of communities of inquiry and the higher expertise they represent is a potential stumbling block. For many governments and university managers the ideal academic is a competitive figure who constantly seeks advancement and recognition, as these are the particular assets which are of value to university reputation and ranking. Rather than advancement and recognition coming about as a due consequence of a commitment to inquiry and the advancement of collective expertise, these phenomena are valued in themselves, however they are achieved (Beck and Young 2005). The strategic academic is thus rewarded for canniness, for making strategic moves to advance career, funding and citation, as these are the only indicators that can be measured. Measures of commitment and collective expertise are difficult to identify, and anyway are not suitably individualised to fit with contemporary organisational reward and promotion structures. The appeal to forms of 'magic' is clear – the strategic academic or university may ape the rituals of the community of inquiry but may have ulterior objectives – the maximisation of esteem and profit rather than the maximisation of expertise. Secrecy and surprise may be rewarded if it secures advantage – and regard to previous expertise is irrelevant – if an old trick can be presented as new with a fresh turn of phrase, or new terminology, then it should be performed if it has a good chance of achieving the desired results. Audiences must be drawn in to applaud, irrespective of the underlying value of the work.

Tendencies towards these magical phenomena are arguably encouraged by the corporatisation of the university and the increasing supremacy of non-disciplinary purposes in the business of higher education. In a context in which institutional prestige and profitability has become a potent driver of behaviour, it is important to consider how these pressures can be mitigated.

The antithesis of the destructive power of magic can be found in those disciplinary communities that still seek to uphold shared conceptions of the sacred and to sustain common bonds, and here magical strategies may be resisted stubbornly. However, in some disciplines the structure of the knowledge base may allow for some fragmentation – and this may enable perspectives to grow that promise novelty and insight but offer little other than a new ‘specialised language’ (Bernstein 1999) around which a new group of scholars can gather. Disciplines such as Sociology are notorious for their ability to endlessly produce new ‘schools’ or ‘isms’ that are heralded by their advocates as offering some form of progress on previous thought. Critiques of ‘voice discourse’ and standpoint theory (i.e. Moore and Muller 1999) suggest that some social theorists are hell-bent on unpicking any consensus around any agreed, albeit fallible, knowledge about the world. The endless quest to expose power relations could lead to the dismissal of any forms of reliable, credible knowledge, and a despairing relativism, if there is no impetus to arrive at new collective representations. Nevertheless, an emphasis on standpoint and unresolved power imbalances can also be understood as an over-riding concern for justice (Connell 2012), and as a reminder to the guardians of expertise that current collective representations may need further work to better accord with our ever-changing societies.

### **Pedagogic rights as a framework for supporting higher expertise**

If the conditions for higher expertise are being destabilised by the commodification of knowledge and the reassertion of new forms of hierarchy, what models can higher education look to as democratic alternatives that preserve a notion of truth and expertise, but open the opportunity for their continual reconstruction? Bernstein’s three pedagogic rights (enhancement, inclusion and participation) were foregrounded in the introduction of his final book (2000, xx-xxi), at the start of a section entitled ‘Democracy and pedagogic rights’. They set out the ‘conditions for effective democracy’ (in discourse and practice) at the ‘individual’, ‘social’ and ‘political’ level (ibid., xxi). They have not received much attention in the academic literature and remain to an extent ‘enigmatic’ (Frاندji and Vitale 2016), although have recently been employed to discuss the South African higher education context (Luckett and Naicker 2016) and the role of universities in human development (McClean et al. 2017). What they offer is a means for considering the foundations for how expertise can operate in a society in which ‘all have a stake’ (Bernstein 2000, xx) in that expertise through ‘gift and

reciprocity' (Frاندji and Vitale 2016, 31), 'giving' and 'receiving' (Bernstein 2000, xx) for mutual benefit. What becomes clear through a closer analysis of the pedagogic rights, is that they are predicated upon and are interrelated with a notion of higher expertise, and that they provide the beginnings of an answer to the problematic question of engagement with the secular sacred in contemporary society that is discussed above.

Firstly, there is the right to 'individual enhancement', which is described as a 'a condition for experiencing boundaries' and boundaries which are 'tension points condensing the past and opening up possible futures' (Bernstein 2000, xx). This right relies on the notion that enhancement is possible, and therefore that an individual can achieve a greater form of enlightenment or 'critical understanding'(ibid.) through engagement with those 'tension points'. This in turn assumes that someone somewhere (i.e. an expert community) must establish what those tensions points are and must judge when enhancement has taken place. We have therefore something akin to an aspect of 'bildung', formation or 'subjectification' (Biesta 2010), and based upon the notion of a trajectory towards greater expertise and understanding (Winch 2010). However, this is clearly not static but rests on the potential for 'new possibilities' (Bernstein 2000, xx), thereby implying that the acquisition of current expertise is not an end in itself but a means for finding new engagement with the world. The expertise can thus be conceptualised as iterative and transformative, and the individual in accessing that expertise opens up new possibilities both for herself and for the future of that expertise. As Luckett and Naicker point out, this is the right 'that realises both the private and public goods of HE' (2016, 12), but is heavily compromised without the other two rights (participation and inclusion). If higher education is based only on individual enhancement to the exclusion of the right to participate and to be included, then the risk is not only that the most powerful individuals will dominate access to expertise, but also that expertise itself becomes increasingly moribund.

Secondly, the relation between society and expertise is reinforced through the right to 'participation', which is 'not only about discourse, about discussion, it is about practice, and a practice that must have *outcomes*' (Bernstein 2000, xx-xxi). Here Bernstein's model envisages not only engagement with but also *involvement* in expert practice, suggesting that a democratic society is founded on a right not only to access expertise but also to become an expert oneself. Participation in the expert practice at the level of 'outcome', where that practice has something 'at stake' (Rouse 2001) is a right for all in society. Where this is unavailable democracy starts to break down and we have the grounds for increasing



alienation from that expertise. The right to participate means participation in the ‘procedures whereby order is constructed, maintained and changed’ (Bernstein 2000, xxi), and therefore this participation entails an increasing licence to take on responsibility for construction and change as the requirements of the expert body of knowledge change in the light of social, technological, physical and economic changes in the wider world. This is the condition for ‘civic practice, and operates at the level of politics’ (ibid., xxi). Its modality affects the extent to which an expert body of knowledge maintains or loses relevance and truthfulness to the world around it, and to citizens in societies. It suggests the norms of practice we should find in Durkheim’s idealised church, reimagined into a context of mass involvement in collective representation.

Thirdly, the right to inclusion encompasses ‘the right to be included, socially, intellectually, culturally and personally’, but also ‘a right to be separate, to be autonomous’ (Bernstein 2000, xx), and therefore to have one’s individuality and right to take a minority view respected. Lockett and Naicker (2016) outline how issues of ‘recognition’ are central to this, drawing on post-colonial contexts, but with salience to debates around engagement with higher education in European nations (i.e. see discussions of working class identity in higher education (Reay, Crozier and Clayton 2009; Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller 2013).

Institutional life in higher education may be prone to conservatism, bias and hostility to difference, as in any institutional context. As Lockett and Naicker (2016) highlight, Bernstein’s pedagogic rights are part of a project of ‘analysis of the social biases in education’ which ‘lie deep within the very structure of the educational system’s processes...and their social assumptions (Bernstein 2000, xix). However, the ‘integration’ of inclusion must occur, importantly, ‘without absorption’ (Frandji and Vitale 2016, 16), leaving open the potential for agency and the ongoing iteration of expertise through engagement with new perspectives. Without this subtle conception of inclusion, which acknowledges the dialectic nature of social membership (Lockett and Naicker 2016), higher expertise risks either retreating to a notion of ‘received truth’ which all must accept with deference, or to the contradictions of truthfulness without the pursuit of truth (Young and Muller 2007). The emphasis on inclusion is therefore vital as a bulwark against attempts to retreat into elitism and the hierarchisation of expertise.

### **Concluding remarks**

The above discussion raises questions for how higher education conceives its role, and for the practice of higher education. It could be argued that norms that underpin expert practice in higher education constantly have to be challenged and reformed to take account of new realisations and accountabilities. However, in many societies governments have responded by pressurising higher education to respond to market imperatives and narrow measurements of expertise. Is there a tendency in such a context to retreat defensively to received truth or hierarchy, or to embrace corporate security, rather than support continual inquiry and accept a degree of uncertainty? Higher education institutions in some countries are increasingly distant from the communities in which they are based, answering instead to league tables and modelling their activities on notions of the 'global research university' (Marginson 2006). Furthermore, academic work seems increasingly to be defined in terms of measurable 'outcomes', irrespective of community commitment. Are these promising conditions for the upholding of an open and iterative model of higher expertise which can effectively challenge 'post-truths'? It is not enough, therefore, to have an adequate conception of higher expertise, in a global context in which higher education institutions and academic practitioners are increasingly being pushed towards marketised research and pedagogic practices that respect only financial value. Such logics actively undermine the potential for expert communities to operate, and dismiss the criteria of excellence upon which notions of higher expertise are based, replacing them with a belief in the 'inevitable obsolescence' (Beck and Young 2005, 191) of knowledge forms that have become the commodified properties of winner-takes-all academics and institutions. Such academic practice becomes increasingly complicit with the 'post-truth' marketplace, making the struggle for higher expertise that bit more challenging.

It is clear, furthermore, that the 'post-truth' context is antithetical to notions of higher expertise underpinned by and predicated on pedagogic rights. One thesis might be that the post truth context is a consequence of a collapse of deference for 'authority', both in institutional and epistemic terms, obscuring all that is good and true. An alternative argument might be that ongoing assaults on deference are necessary to expose dominance and bias, and that a 'post-truth' or 'post-enlightenment' context opens the opportunity for multiple voices to be heard and for undue influence to be exposed. A third view might emphasise that the post-truth context demonstrates the extent to which the knowledge embedded within expert communities has been 'divorced from persons, their commitments, their personal dedications' (Bernstein 2000, 86), as a consequence of the extension of market logics into higher expertise. The implication is that the notion of truth is increasingly commodified so that

knowledge can ‘flow like money to wherever it can create advantage and profit’ (ibid.). Truth becomes ‘truths’, belief becomes identity-based, and the few are able to reap the rewards of increasing levels of public and private disorientation.

This paper has sought to demonstrate how the constituent elements of expertise are strongly interdependent with the nature of society, and the ‘sociality’ (Young and Muller 2007) thereby underpinning that expertise. It is suggested that the institutions and disciplinary and professional communities responsible for higher expertise have insufficiently recognised the new context of a non-deferential society in which all assertions are challenged, and need to work harder at ensuring inclusion and participation to make enhancement a possibility for all. Making pedagogic rights central to a refreshed notion of higher expertise thus requires a commitment to all three rights: enhancement, inclusion and participation. Commitment to one or two without the other is almost as detrimental to higher expertise as commitment to none.

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